Interactivities, intersubjectivities and language

On dialogism and phenomenology

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This theoretical paper deals with intersubjectivity and interactivity in relation to language and sense-making. It starts out from a critical discussion of certain proposals regarding the nature and localisation of language, that is, radical versions of individualism and collectivism. The conclusion is that both are untenable. Instead, we must assume that language originates and lives in interactivities between sense-making people. Such an 'interactionism' is close to dialogism.

The bulk of the paper is devoted to the relations between interactivities and intersubjectivities. Adducing arguments from a cross-disciplinary approach to language and languaging, we end up with a conclusion that interactivities are more basic than both intersubjectivities and linguistic dialogue. In the summarising discussion the paper suggests some foundations for a dynamic and dialogical language science, as an antidote to formal linguistics.

Keywords: interactivity, intersubjectivity, language, dialogue, interactionism, dialogism, phenomenology, evolution

1. Where is language, in the individuals or in the cultural collectivity?

My main topic in this article will be intersubjectivity and language. However, I will argue, in accordance with many other present-day commentators, that interactivity is a more basic notion than both these phenomena. I will also suggest that we may wish to use the basic terms in the plural rather than in the singular: interactivities and intersubjectivities. But for a start I will take a brief look at another general issue, that of individuality vs. collectivity of language, since this could serve as a suitable backdrop for a discussion of interactivities and intersubjectivities.

The issue of the nature of language with regard to individuality or collectivity is legion in the history of the language sciences; cf. e.g. Rommetveit (2008),

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or Hanks (1996). Hanks says, *à propos* what he considers to be "contradictions in language" (or the language sciences/PL): language is "both an abstract system and an intimate part of our daily experience, an individual capacity for expression and a social fact, a form and an activity" (Hanks 1996.: vii).

Language is sometimes seen exclusively as a *property of individuals*; it would then be something existing only in individual speaker-listeners. Sometimes language is regarded as something "owned by" individuals. However, language must be also seen as a *collective, cultural phenomenon*, belonging to communities of speakers, and irreducible to individual phenomena. Accordingly, Donald (2008, 194) argues that "[l]anguages do not originate in individual brains; they emerge only in culture.". These conceptions have been applied both to humans' general language capacity (in French *langage*), and to specific languages (*langue(s)*).

Individualism and collectivism are the extreme positions in the long debate on the nature of language. But there are of course other solutions to the conundrum than these two. A third position, the one to be propounded in this article, would be to suggest something else as fundamental, namely, interactivity, a theory which in a way encompasses both "dialogic[al] individuals" (Weigand 2010, 59) and collective or social aspects of language. In passing, I shall also mention a fourth option that tries to remain neutral or agnostic with regard to the individuality vs. collectivity issue.

Let us first consider the solutions suggested by 'individualists' (who are usually psychologically, and nowadays in particular neuropsychologically, minded) and 'collectivists' (usually sociologically minded).

(a) *Individualism* often starts out from a methodological individualism (Schegloff 1991; Trognon Batt 2010, 17: 'solipsism' in methodology). Lukes (1977) emphasises, in a critical review, that methodological individualism takes the individual as its self-evident starting point for any 'real' explanation. After all, it is argued, only individuals can be observed, tested and interviewed. There does not seem to be any other sort of language-possessing body in the world; we cannot find any supraindividual community or generalised others to interview. Hence, methodological individualism often turns into ontological individualism: as far as language is concerned, the conclusion is that it exists only in individual persons' minds.

The individual's mind obviously builds upon the brain's processing. Only individual people have brains. The present-day immense interest in brains therefore seems to reinforce the individualist position in several sciences. Many natural-science-inspired psychologists have turned into neuropsychologists. Neuroscientist

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Friedemann Pulvermüller (2002) summarises his position in a nutshell: "*Language* is a system of brain circuits." (p. 270: italics in original).[1]

From the point of view of mainstream brain sciences it may be reasonable to see language as a "system of brain circuits". But for the 'collectivist', language is essentially in the interrelations between sense-making people in the world, and cannot be exhaustively explicated as contained in isolated brains. Against the individualist arguments, we may therefore insist that individuals are not isolated cognisers (speakers or thinkers), but social beings. Any individual's knowledge necessarily has a social dimension, and social meanings have been acquired in and through interacting with others, and after having acquired the meaning potentialities of language and other semiotic resources we go on interacting with others in ways that presuppose assumptions of common or shared knowledge, e.g. referential intersubjectivity (Sinha Rodriguez 2008, 358). What we say and do in the world is penetrated by sociocultural (as well as personal) knowledge. This particular position will be developed below into 'interactionism'.

Brains are not autonomous. They work, together with their bodies, in interaction with others and with the use of artefacts (e.g. Donald 2001). Mindful action cannot exist without intersubjectivity. "Intersubjectivity is based upon participation in joint action, and such participation also implicates the shared material, interobjective world." (Sinha and Rodriguez, 2008, 357). Thus, "the ontology of the social" cannot be reduced to the biology and physiology of individuals (Sinha and Rodriguez 2008, 357).

(b) I will return to individualism in a few moments. But let us first remind ourselves that another route to take on the issue of the nature of language is to stress the *objectivity of social facts* (e.g. Durkheim and other sociologists); social facts are independent of any single individual's thoughts or will. It has sometimes been argued that such structures exercise a coercion on subjects' conduct (Parsons, Foucault etc.) Such collectivism seems to forget about the individuals' agency (Linell 2014).

Moreover, this collectivism or social objectivism may lead to the reification of abstract structures. *Where* are these structures then? One suggestion, typically only vaguely stated by its proponents, is that language exists in some 'supraindividual'

1. Within linguistics Chomsky is, at least nowadays (cf. n. 3), well-known for assuming that his grammars are models of individuals' minds/brains. "[W]hen we speak of the mind, we are speaking at some level of abstraction of yet unknown physical mechanisms of the brain" (Chomsky 1988, 7). The modular theory of language (Chomsky 2005) assumes that a language is strictly divided into 'modules' : syntax, phonology, semantics, pragmatics. For the generative linguist these modules are not just analytic, heuristic notions to be used in analysing (i.e. sorting out) linguistic data, but they are potentially true models of the neurological organisation of language in individual brains.

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superorganic (and simultaneously immaterial?) mind or 'spirit'. But such a spirit, or 'collective consciousness'. seems hard to sustain theoretically and empirically (cf. Csordas 2008, 113, citing Ricoeur 1991).[2] Rather, interactionists (see below) would argue that the social realities exist only in the intersubjective relations between people; they are not social "things". Searle (1995; 2009), who analyses human civilisation but is relatively individualistically inclined, argues that social facts are the products of (inter)subjective construction of the world.

(c) But before going to the real ('third') alternative (interactionism, see Sections 2 and 3), I will briefly consider the attempt to *be neutral or remain agnostic* about the localisation of language. Consider the following famous quote from Chomsky (1965, 3):

> Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.

At least the following three aspects of this notion of 'linguistic competence' deserve to be highlighted here:

1. It concerns *only language* (the language system), not cognition or communication; explanations will be confined to internal relations within the system. This point is shared with Saussure, but Chomsky moved away from Saussurian structuralism into hyperstructuralism in building *one* (putatively) coherent model of the whole language system (with syntax as the core)).
2. *Practices* in situated languaging (language use) are not mentioned, but belong to linguistic 'performance', along with a host of quite different phenomena (memory limitations, distractions, etc.). Thus, Chomsky basically shares Saussure's conception of *la parole* as individual, unpredictable, *accidental* and chaotic, i.e. disorderly rather than orderly. (Now, we know that practices of languaging are orderly at many levels. Yet, specific features of situated discourse are of course not predictable; people have agency.)

2. However, the structuralist notion of the language system is so abstract that it is compatible with several other interpretations. One is arguably Platonic idealism, which could be understood as saying that the issue of the localisation of the language system is actually meaningless, since it is simply immaterial in nature. This may be regarded as the self-professed theory in early Chomskyan theory (Chomsky, 1966: *Cartesian Linguistics*). Another interpretation is that the social nature of the system is an outcome of interactivities in language use ('languaging', cf. n. 4), the latter of course being a social phenomenon. However, linguistic systems as described by structuralists are usually very far removed from patterns and processes in languaging (as contrasted to interactionism, cf. below). On the views of the later Chomsky, cf. n. 2.

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3. Chomsky's *competence* (corresponding in some ways to Saussure's *langue*) is assumed to be internalised within a speaker-listener, but not an ordinary speaker-listener in the real world but an idealised one within a completely homogeneous speech-community.

Apart from language as an individual property and language as a cultural community phenomenon, there are two — somewhat related — main perspectives on language in linguistics: language as a system of *abstract forms* vs. language as *action, activity and interactivity*. Language as form has (almost always) dominated the discipline of linguistics, which has been preoccupied with sorting out the expression forms of languages, thus giving primacy to the expression side. (Typically, these expressions were seen as having the function of representing (propositional) knowledge about the world, at the expense of all other functions of language. Cf. the early Wittgenstein's notion of the 'picture theory' of language.) By contrast, functionalist, interactionist and contextualist theories of language focus primarily on languaging in actual human life, how language is integrated in our actions, interactions and ways of constructing and organising our conceptions of the world. This second perspective, language as action and interactivity, has for long been brushed aside in formalist linguistics.

Returning to Saussure's structuralism and Chomsky's hyperstructuralism, we note their common characteristic of the total bracketing or neglect of languaging[3] and action.[4] The approaches are formal: language is seen as systems of abstract objects. (Some theories see these objects as building-blocks of utterances; the dominant metaphor is that of structure-building.). Note how Chomsky's (1965) neutralism (cf. the quote above) tries to overcome the problem of individuality vs collectivity with the help of two fictive ideas: Individuality is treated in terms of an "ideal speaker-listener who knows its language perfectly". There are no such people in the world. The idealised language user is further assumed to be part of a "completely homogeneous speech-community". There are no such communities in the world.

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3. The term languaging has been used in the Maturana and Varela biosemiotics tradition (cf. Cowley, Major, Steffensen and Dinis 2010), as well as in the Hallidayan linguistics tradition. Some scholars in applied linguistics have used the term too (Becker 1991). Languaging, in my interpretation, refers to *situated cognitive and communicative activities* in which language is used as a semiotic resource. The importance of this resource may vary from being central to marginal, depending on the activity type. According to interactionism and dialogism, languaging in real life is primary. 'Languaging' is preferred here to the more common 'language use', simply because the latter term presupposes that 'language' is there first, before it can be 'used'.

4. We should note, of course, that Saussure never published any theory of (the grammar of) *la parole* (cf. 'languaging').

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One may ask oneself why linguists like Chomsky developed such a non-solution to Hanks' "contradiction". The answer seems to be that they wish to save the notion of a unified, abstract language underlying both speech and writing (and other 'media) and common to all kinds of genres and activity types in actual languaging. But there are good reasons (e.g. Linell 2005; 2009; 2012) for us to abandon such a notion of distinct monolithic language systems.

Linguistics was first prescriptive, then became descriptive (although with a prescriptive residue). Both approaches home in on linguistic structures. Structures are also said to *explain* parts, details and individual cases (instantiations). But here we actually have another problem in Chomskyanism, and more widely in formal linguistics, namely, that this reasoning is not explanatory in any real sense. How did the structures themselves get there? In what sense do they exist, and where (in individuals, or in some collective world)? While a linguistic model in so-called theoretical linguistics is inclined to work with structures and formalisations (reminiscent of logic and mathematics) in a hyperstructuralist way, it does not address the issue of (deeper) explanations. Chomsky simply declares that language "just is there" (MacNeilage 2008: 3), and cannot be (even partially) explained in terms of what we know about biology, physiology, perception, action, social interaction and other phenomena which we know to be deeply intertwined with languaging.[5]

To sum up, returning to the issue of the individuality vs collectivity of language, we can conclude that both ideas in their extreme form — individuality excluding collectivity, or the other way around — are impossible; neither can account for the complexity of language. At the same time, language does exhibit both individual and collective-sociocultural properties. We must therefore conclude that the whereabouts of language, and in particular its origin, is somewhere else. The obvious way out of the conundrum is: language, and other semiotic resources, have their home-base in the *interactivities and interrelations between individuals in social interaction*, and between individuals and the ecosocial (i.e. physical and social) world. Language is (inter)relational, not thing-like. As Weigand (2012, 396) points out, in the end there is no language as an independent object, only human beings with their ability of languaging with others, an ability which is integrated with other abilities.

5. It has been sometimes been argued that one cannot criticise Chomsky for ignoring (what I call) languaging, since he always focused exclusively on abstract aspects of the language system. But his rhetoric certainly lays strong claims to being an explanatory theory of language. Therefore, if this theory only provides some internal-structural explanations, bypassing all possibilities of finding empirical or evolutionary explanations outside of language structures, this is unacceptable when coming from somebody who claims to be a major theorist of language. His starting point is that language cannot be explained and "just is there". See MacNeilage (2008) for extensive discussion.

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2. The co-evolution of the mind and the understanding of the ecosocial environment

So far I have only suggested, following many others, that we need a theory of language and languaging that is based on the interactivities and intersubjectivities of sense-making people. This presupposes a theory of actions as mindful and embodied behaviours, e.g. utterances (Haye and Larraín 2012,) that participants associate with situated meanings, for which the speakers are held accountable (by themselves and others).[6] Sense-making of something in the world/environment involves making it somehow *relevant* for some purpose or in some context, assigning some kind of *value* to it (Zlatev 2009; Hodges 2011) and relating it to knowledge that one already somehow has access to.

Sense- (or meaning-)making people are social individuals who use and make meanings together: interactivity and intersubjectivity require the (direct or indirect) participation of more than one individual (cf. Sinha and Rodriguez 2008, 360). Intersubjectivity disappears when people die. If all people using a language die out, that language will also be dead (unless written products, computers and other artefacts remain, and some creatures appear who can decipher them). Thus, the theory of the primacy of interactivities and intersubjectivity contributes to dissolving the "contradiction" (Hanks) in language theorising between individuality and collectivity.

This theory comes with another core postulate, about the co-evolution of the sense-making mind and the understanding of the ecosocial (physical and sociocultural) environment. Merlin Donald (1991; 2001; 2008) (see Section 10 below) prefers to talk about the co-evolution of mind and culture. I suggest that this is also part of dialogical theorising, as it stresses the relation between the sense-making agent and the affordances of the environment. We might think of this as a metatheory of as based on these two sides of the sense-making process (Linell 2009).

Finally, we must sort out some problems about brains, minds, bodies and worlds. The first point is that minds and sense-making need a processing substrate. This substrate consists of *embodied brains* (in organisms that have highly sophisticated brains *and bodies*). Only human individuals possess such brains, although we must of course ascribe some relatively sophisticated capacities to some higher animals and intelligent artificial systems (computers), but these are marginal in comparison with what humans can achieve, under fortunate circumstances. This

6. For further elaboration of general concepts, such as 'meaning', 'world', 'communication' and 'embodiment', see Zlatev (2009). I don't here indulge in a discussion of the concepts/terms 'sense' vs. 'meaning', although I tend to use the former as a wider term, reserving meaning-making for the use of conventional signs.

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is not to deny that animals and computers may be better at, say, some kinds of sensory perceptions (e.g. the olfactory sense of dogs) and large-scale calculations, respectively. The main point, however, is that there are no reasons to believe in bodyless sense-makings.

A second point: brains are *necessary but not sufficient* for sense-making. Minds need environments, as well as internal bodily sensations and "inner dialogue", to make sense of. It is a solid fact that brains need bodies *and relevant environments*; we do not believe in a "brain in a vat" (Damasio 1996, 227), that is, a brain as a closed-off computer-like system. That organisms are not isolated is a central point in biosemiotic organism-environment theory and in distributed language theory (Cowley, Major, Steffensen and Dinis 2010; Cowley 2011). In short, we get the "content" (referential anchoring) of our sense-making *in the world*, through our bodies, in and through interactions with (and contact with, observations of, reflections on) others, with the use of artefacts and objects (and processes) existing or occurring in the physical world. Artefacts include inscriptions, designed objects, instruments that support human capacities, for example, senses like sight and hearing, furthermore cognition, categorisation, calculation, as well as transportation, social interaction and practical activities (such as cooking meals, chopping wood, building houses etc.). Artefacts build a cultural world with routines, values, institutions (Searle 2008: 'civilisation'). The outer ecosocial world, from which we get the substance of content for our sense-making, is by definition not part of single individuals.

In other words, we must be able to handle *both* the fact that individuals use embodied brains for the *processing* of sense-making, and the fact that they exploit the ecosocial environment for the *content* of sense-making. Besides, both radical individualism and abstract social objectivism are unrealistic theories. Instead, the solution must be one which can reconcile subjectivity and objectivity, or individuality and collectivity, a theory which is both or rather neither/nor. This must be a dialogical theory of sense-making, based on interactivity, and intersubjectivity through social participation and interaction. In this model, the environment is not a provider of ready-made content; the sense-maker must be active in making sense of the world. A person's mind lives in and through a *body* (e.g. Merleau-Ponty 1962), in social *interaction with others*, in a *world of objects*, tools, artefacts, inscriptions, etc., that are *made meaningful* in and through an active, selective and purposive exploration of this world. These three "constituents" (body, mind, world; Clark 1997) together produce the stuff that the brain is working with. The mind without content is empty and blind; it is just a complex machinery of neurophysiological mechanisms, grey and white matter inside the skull.

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3. Dialogism and phenomenology

Given what has been said so far, the argument is that we need a theory of the human mind that is not entirely brain-based. Nor should the theory make exclusive recourse to some kind of abstract social world *sui generis*. Instead, our theory would assume that it is part of the human nature to indulge in meaning-making, action, communication, perception, cognition, memory, culture in *social* and socially constrained ways, i.e. basically in and through social interaction in the physical and social ('ecosocial') world.

Two interrelated traditions in philosophy and human sciences are basic for (our understanding of) intersubjectivity and language. They are phenomenology and dialogism. There are extensive disagreements about what should be included under these labels, and about which their most fundamental assumptions are. It would be far beyond the scope of this paper to account for all relevant convergences and divergencies of opinion on these matters. But let us simplify matters for our current purposes.[7] I take phenomenology (Zahavi 2001; 2012) to deal with how the world is apperceived and experienced by humans, under different perspectives in different cultures and situations. Thus, we are *not* concerned with the nature of the physical world as such, but with people's sense-makings of the world. Dialogism also deals with human sense-making, and inherited this focus largely from phenomenology; meaning is construed in the world as we experience it. But dialogism has an important focal point that is different from most phenomenological accounts: the insistence that individual sense-makers are interdependent with *other* sense-makers ("others": individual others, groups, generalised others); we are not experiencing the affordances of the environment, or the "world" at large, as socially isolated individuals. As Cornejo (2008) — one of the few phenomenologists who makes the argument both explicit and central — expresses it, "meaning is not only experience in the world, but experience *with others*" (p. 176/ italics in original). This divergence between classical phenomenology and dialogism will have considerable consequences for our concepts of intersubjectivity.

4. Interactionism: Interactivity is basic.

Interactionism is part and parcel of the general meta-theory of *dialogism*, which assumes that *other-orientation* is a fundamental property of human sense-making. The role of interactivities is partially a *new* discovery in its own right, as a

7. Of course, phenomenology and dialogism encompass many other assumptions, which have to be bracketed here. As for dialogism, see Linell (2009).

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phenomenon with its own properties and logic (Trognon and Batt 2010). Goffman (1983) talks about 'the interaction order' (Rawls 1987: 'interaction order sui generis'). Among other important interactionists we find Schegloff (1991), who says that "direct interaction is the primordial scene of social life" (Trognon and Batt, 11), and Goodwin (2000), who has developed a detailed multi-modal interaction analysis. For Schegloff (1987) intersubjectivity comes to life in the evolving local interaction, which includes a 'context-in-the-making'. These and many other contemporary scholars believe in a kind of power of the social interaction order, a position quite different from the traditional view in linguistics, for which situated language use — 'performance' for Chomsky (1965) and 'parole' for Saussure (1964) — was entirely accidental or even disorderly, and without relevance for the understanding of language.

Of course, scholars and other people have talked about interaction between individuals long before the last few decades, but interaction was then often taken in an 'external' sense; to put it crudely, individuals are assumed to be present first, before they can start to interact. But in interactionism and dialogism in the senses presupposed here, interactivities are 'internal' or 'intrinsic' to human relations, and therefore, the interaction itself is the primary phenomenon to be analysed (Linell 1998, 2009). Interactions provide the very 'units of analysis'. For example, an interactional sequence is not a series of independent actions by different autonomous individuals.

A massive accumulation of empirical research from the last 40 years or so has made interactionism and dialogism increasingly consolidated as scientific metatheories. When we talk about intersubjectivity and interactivity as primary, this is therefore not just a matter of philosophy, but based on extensive robust empirical findings. (More about this below.)

Interactionist theories have been proposed under many different guises: the Social Mind (Valsiner and van der Veer 2000), the Shared Mind (Zlatev, Racine, Sinha, and Itkonen 2008), the Dialogical Mind (Linell 2009; dialogical intersubjectivity in Trognon and Batt 2010, 17) etc. We also have the conversation-analytic idea of the social mind (cf. Schegloff 1991). Other related ideas are the Extended Mind (Clark and Chalmers 1998), the Enactive Mind (Thompson 2007; phenomenology and biosemiotics), the Distributed Mind (actually distributed cognition, Hutchins, or distributed language, Cowley 2011), and the Hybrid Mind (Säljö 2013).[8] What drives and unites such "shared" or "distributed" minds cannot be the separate brains only, but it is the interactivities between and within human beings in the world. In this context, Levinson (2006) talks about the human "interaction

8. Walmsley (2008) has coined the mnemonic DEEDS for "Dynamic, Embodied, Extended, Distributed, Situated".

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engine", and Schegloff (2006) calls interaction "the infrastructure for social institutions, the natural ecological niche for language, and the arena in which culture is enacted" (rubric on p. 70).

Consequently, the above-mentioned approaches have a lot in common (sense-making does not take place in purely individual minds, and interactivities are crucial), but there are also some differences. If we think of the dichotomy of individual vs. collective as an ontological assumption, à la Descartes, it should be abolished. Not all of the other above-mentioned approaches assign a truly central role to others, in addition to individual self as the sense-maker. For example, Distributed Language Theory (DLT; Cowley 2011) stresses the necessary individual-environment coupling. Donald (1991; 2008) underscores the brain-culture co-evolution (see also below). But DLT seems to underestimate the importance of two aspects (Linell 2013):

(i) It tends to treat the ecosocial environment as one homogeneous entity, as the single individual's (organism's) environment. But this environment contains *other* sense-makers, who are also active centres of sense-making activities, and who are sources of alterity (Section 7 below). In addition, there are asymmetries between self and others.

(ii) It tends to ignore the asymmetry between the sense-maker and the environment at large: the processing is done and the results produced by the sense-making agents (minds), not by the environment.

If interactivity is such a basic condition of being human, one might ask why this position — being against extreme individualism — has not been established as commonplace in the human science since long? There may be many answers to this question, but three conditions seem to have been strongly influential:

1. It is only in the last three-to-five most recent decades that researchers have had access to the necessary technology for observing and analysing interactivities and their on-line dynamics in sufficient detail.
2. We have, for reasons sketched above, a focus on individuals, i.e. in an important sense they are the only living organisms that have the necessary bodies, brains and mental capacities for sense-making.
3. Theories of mind or language have typically taken their point of departure in the adult individual, often an idealised version of the "fully competent" participant. Children have been looked upon as incompetent on many points, only gradually acquiring and mastering the adult system (e.g. the whole language). This position is characteristic of structuralism, as opposed to a dialogist, evolutionary-developmental theory (Linell 2009, 252–255).

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5. Intersubjectivity vs. subjectivity and objectivity

It is not always easy to hold on to the idea that interrelations between people (interactionism), rather than the individuals seen as independent entities, are of primordial nature. While it may be part of common-sense thinking that we must surely assume that individuals are there first, before they can start to interact (cf. #2 of the preceding section), this everyday reasoning is fallacious. It is built on the idea that we first have conscious individuals (more or less mentally fully equipped people, even kinds of Cartesian Egos or Husserlian transcendental Egos), who can choose whether to communicate with others or not. This cannot be true, which becomes clear if we think of the matters in a developmental perspective (another characteristic of dialogism; Linell 2009). The new-born infant is amazingly capable of interacting with an active carer-partner (see Section 9 below), but it does not do so from a position of a conscious personality.

But there are some aspects of individuality that appear early on in life. Basically, they are:

- The individual being has a *body* of its own, and this is the locus and origo of all activities that pertain to living and sense-making. "[T]he Body is the bearer of the zero point of orientation, the bearer of the here and now, out of which the pure Ego intuits space and the whole world of the senses." (Husserl 1989, 61, quoted by Duranti 2010: 8). In one very basic sense, a human being is always where his/her body is.
- The individual develops a kind of "sense of self" (Damasio 2000; Gallagher 2005) talks about a "body image", based on "(at least) haptic, proprioceptive and visual experience of one's own body" (Zlatev 2009, 153).
- From very early on, the individual human being acquire a biography, built on memories of important experiences, and on learning events about how things are to be done, both often with others. The *individual biography* (Damasio 2000: 'autobiographical self') will, subject to alterations, follow the single person through life. An important part will be the communicative biography, experiences of encounters with other people. Another aspect will be self-images or self-narratives emerging from the interactions with others.[9]

Even though these points do refer to individualities, one's self is largely of a social nature (confer especially the third point above). Indeed, there are important, empirically sustained counter-arguments to the idea of the autonomous individual:

9. I will not here go into psychiatric conditions or aberrations, and their dialogical theorisation. Two of these would be egoism/ machiavellianism (the calculation of others' future reactions/ initiatives in relation to self's interests) and autism (the inability to take others' perspectives.)

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- A person is a social being, partly constituted in/through self-other relations.
- The world around us is, from very early on, meaningful, because we can see that it has been, and still is, co-habited by others, who have 'been there' and arranged it in practical ways and described it linguistically (Duranti 2010, 11).
- A person can host a lot of "dialogical emotions" which can only be thought of in relation to others: shame, embarassment, guilt, pride, complacence, complaisance, conscience, consciousness, compassion, empathy/sympathy, morality (right/wrong).
- Similarly, central parts of human existence and sociocultural life, such as morality and trust/distrust (Linell and Marková 2013), are quintessentially dialogical in nature; they are "displayed, and made visible and ascribable on the basis of actors' actions and discourse" (Tileagă 2013, 56, quoting Jayyusi 1991, 243).
- The idea of individual freedom is something which actually presupposes a fair amount of others' acceptance or subordination: monologisation takes place only with the consent of others. Searle's (2009) analysis of human civilisation builds on these insights.

Such points could easily be multiplied.

It is therefore important to insist on the point that intersubjectivity is different from both subjectivity and objectivity. Subjectivity could be thought of as ideas, opinions or attitudes that can be more or less exhaustively characterised as the single individual's own mental products (more about this below). Actually, something like this has been the general idea in phenomenology, particularly in the work of the "founding father" Edmund Husserl, who started out from subjectivity in a way reminiscent of Descartes.

Objectivity would for many be an overall perspective, sometimes characterised as coming "from nowhere" or "from an omniscient knower" and regarded as "objectively true". Often, the "objective world" is defined as what is "out there" irrespective of whether it is observed or described by human sense-makers.

However, it seems obvious that both subjectivity and objectivity are idealisations that can hardly be completely realised in the real world. From the point of view of interactivity theory, both subjectivist and (quasi-)objectivist perspectives can be chiselled out, once individuals and generalised others have emerged from the developing self-other relations described by dialogists (e.g. Linell 2009). This means that interactivity and intersubjectivity are the basic phenomena, and that it would be motivated to think of subjectivities as only partially self-made; they are possible because the individual has access to intersubjective experiences. Obectivities too are basically intersubjective in nature; even Husserl regarded objectivity as derived from intersubjectivity (Duranti 2010). Some sorts of intersubjective objectivities can take the form of (relatively) impersonal and impartial

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stances within some human activities, notably science and administrative systems. But such activity systems have their particular presuppositions as well.

Nonetheless, it has been suggested (Nordin 2011, 554, 580) that (what I call) dialogism and interactionism have implied the rehabilitation of the subject, after e.g. Foucault with his emphasis on discourses and power relations, and impersonal (cultural rather than individual) ways of thinking. It is true that the recognition of situated interactions between sense-makers with agency brings individuality and active meaning-making back into the human sciences (Rommetveit, 2008). But this is not a (re)turn to subjectivism:

a. Dialogism comprises both situated interactions as such, and these interactions as part of more long-term social (situation-transcending) practices (the world we inhabit has been inherited from others, cf. above). As usual, the reference to others concerns both concrete others and more abstract, generalised others.
b. We are not talking about autonomous individuals (as in vulgar liberalism), but about individual people as social beings.
c. Dialogism assigns a central role to intersubjectivity (partially shared knowledge within communites), but also to the search for social recognition (and perhaps social power) on the part of individuals and groups (Marková 2003). Incidentally, precisely this combination (intersubjectivity and social recognition) shows that interactivity is the basic phenomenon.

Dialogical theories constitute a meta-theoretical framework of human sense-making, and as such they are a counter-theory to extreme individualism. Dialogue is more basic than understanding and knowledge, but dynamics in interaction and interactivities is also more basic than verbal dialogue. Participation in interactivities is prior to shared knowledge. Within such a view, subjectivity and collectivity stand out as (partial) specialisations of intersubjectivity/interactivity: subjectivity (self's own cognition) is parasitic on intersubjectivity (Mead, Vygotsky, Cooley etc.), and collectivity can never be complete (there are always individual minds, with their theories, methods and instruments, making sense of "facts" in partly idiosyncratic ways).

This view on interactivity and intersubjectivity owes a great deal to phenomenology, especially perhaps the work of Alfred Schütz and Emmanuel Lévinas. Yet, Duranti (2010), in his recent paper on Husserl and intersubjectivity, comes to the opposite standpoint: for him (and of course for Husserl) intersubjectivity[10]

10. Bergmann (2013) offers some skeptical remarks on the notion of intersubjectivity. As a case in point, he argues that the concepts/terms 'intersubjectivity' and 'interaction' tend to conjure up ideas of the primacy of subjectivity and individual action, respectively (e.g. intersubjectivity would then presuppose subjectivity as the basic phenomenon). This is of course factually

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is more basic than interactivity. (This is the case despite the fact that Duranti, as shown in the paper quoted, shares many assumptions with dialogical theories.) Husserl, the founder of modern phenomenology, started out from the subject (the transcendental Ego, e.g. Duranti 2010., 10) and subjectivity, and tried to build a theory of intersubjectivity from there. Yet, Husserl and Duranti too stress the importance of 'being-with' others in the world; we begin to understand the world from observing others' interactivities and from taking part in various practical and proto-communicative activities. We will then understand the world largely from participating in activities with others, but many understandings will not be truly mutual or shared, but only partially shared (although they are often considered as sufficiently shared for current purposes, or at least participants treat them as if they were shared).[11] Yet, Duranti (e.g. p. 10) insists that it is intersubjectivity that makes interaction possible, rather than the other way around. One hunch would be that Duranti expresses the same idea as Rommetveit (1974) did when he said that "intersubjectivity has to be taken for granted in order to be achieved", a point that I will comment upon in Section 6. Another relevant remark might be that new-born infants seem to exhibit an inborn capacity for dialogicality, a kind of basic intersubjectivity (Section 9). See also Section 11 for a final recap.

6. Intersubjectivity as taken for granted

In a famous passage, Ragnar Rommetveit (1974: 56) suggested that "intersubjectivity has to be taken for granted in order to be achieved". This seemingly paradoxical formulation means that participants must tacitly assume that they have something in common to begin with, if they are to develop more specific or elaborated points of sharedness. That is, intersubjectivity cannot simply be created intentionally in situ; participants must (often unwittingly) assume or presuppose that they share a good deal of knowledge from the very start. If they discover that they do not live up to these assumptions, they can by using strategies of repair — at least sometimes — partially make up for some lacking intersubjectivities.

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correct in Husserl's case. Compare also on 'external interaction' in Section 4 above. In general, it is doubtful if there are any better alternative terms than those beginning with 'inter-'(cf. e.g. 'co-action' in Cowley 2011, and elsewhere).

Bergmann also adduces some remarks by (especially) Simmel and Schütz that are harshly critical of some Husserlian ideas.

11. Compare in this context also the reasonings around 'common ground' of Herb Clark and associates (Clark 1996).

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Rommetveit's dictum points to the role of *trust* in communication. We have to take a lot of things for granted or as shared, if we are to communicate or understand each other, or just quite simply conduct our everyday life without too much friction. Most things are in different ways more or less uncertain, yet despite this uncertainty we must often take actions. Trust is therefore ubiquitous and basic to sense-making. It is part and parcel of every self-other relation, yet elusive and difficult to define and describe. It occurs in several forms, from basic, unreflected trust (e.g. in infant-carer relations) to reflected and calculated trust, e.g. in undertakings with strangers in modern societies. Different forms of trust mirror different forms of intersubjectivity.[12]

Intersubjectivity is sometimes explicated in terms of common ground (Clark 1996), shared intentionality (Tomasello 2008) or 'socially shared cognition' (Schegloff 1991). However, parties to interaction have often quite different backgrounds, and intersubjectivities are usually only partial, rather than complete (see Section 7).[13] The important notion is therefore sufficiently shared understanding for current purposes, that is, for participants to be able to continue the ongoing activity or conversation. In addition, intersubjectivities range from primary forms to the language-dependent forms developed in different kinds of discourses (Section 9). Conversation Analysts usually prefer to see intersubjectivities as contained in aspects on display in overt interactivities.

7. Intersubjectivity vs alterity

Intersubjectivity is not automatic, inevitable or complete (except perhaps in some forms of primary intersubjectivity, see Section 9). The other, whoever (s)he is, is not quite as oneself. Hence, dialogical theories are very much about *alterity*, the role of the other as being *different from self*. Communication is not always about striving for mutual understanding or consensus; parties may have different interests, knowledge, intentions, or limited willingness or practical opportunities to disclose all their ideas, thoughts, intentions, feelings etc. Sharedness, commonality, reciprocity and mutuality are therefore partial. Instead of complete understandings, we aim for understandings, and intersubjectivities, that are *sufficient for current practical purposes* (Garfinkel 1967).

There is a positive value in alterity, in the lack of complete intersubjectivity. Without differences, there would often be no point in communicating (e.g. Linell

12. See Linell and Marková (2013) for references and review of dialogical literature on trust; Gadamer, Garfinkel, Watson and many others.

13. For some discussion of Clark's idea of common ground, see Koschmann and LeBaron (2003).

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and Luckmann 1991). Asymmetries of knowledge are a driving force in social interaction (e.g. Heritage 2012), and we can learn from others and outsiders.[14]

Dialogical theories must be capable of explaining *any* kind of human sense-making and social organisation, whether monologising (and thereby partly impeding others' free thinking) or dialogising (Linell 2009).

8. Interactivity without language or social interaction

This paper has a focus on the role of language in intersubjectivities and of languaging in interactivities. But it deserves to be pointed out, as Duranti (2010) argues, that intersubjectivity as a concept also covers activities that do not involve language use, or activities in which others are at most peripheral. The same can be said about interactivities. For example, children often explore their environments by practical action and by themselves (although often under the supervision or with the scaffolding of adults). When individuals have acquired language in and through participation in or observation of overt sociodialogues, they can use it in silent individual thinking. But they are still dependent on resources, not in the least language itself, that they first encountered in interpersonal use. Sense-making practices involving other media, literature, text-reading, and solo thinking, also involve interactivities of several kinds. Dialogical theories should account for also those forms of sense-making without overt social interaction.

To take just one example of this, how could interactivity be involved in the solitary individual's reading of a book? Well, a literate person is able to use the book as a cognitive or semiotic artefact. She can interpret the text, reconstructing and developing — and thereby adopting, modifying or perhaps rejecting — the potential meanings afforded by its author. A book can elicit an internal dialogue that amounts to creative meaning-making between the reader's self, the affordances of the text and the voices of imagined ('internalised') others. The internal, intraindividual dialogue (Linell 2009, 119) is developmentally secondary to social interaction (cf. Section 11 on Vygotsky), and this is more than a mere metaphor. Internal dialogue is a mental ability that is often interdependent with, and originally made possible by, the interaction with extracorporeal artefacts, like books, papers, images and computer-borne discourse, and the individual's communicative biography and experiences of the world.

14. Mikhail Bakhtin used a concept of 'outsideness' (Morson and Emerson 1990) alongside with 'strangeness' (i.e. alterity).

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9. Forms and levels of intersubjectivity: Trevarthen's developmental theory

So far, I have most of the time followed the tradition of using the term intersubjectivity in the singular, as if there was only one kind. In fact, there are good reasons to speak of intersubjectivities in the plural. Colwyn Trevarthen (e.g. 1979; 1998), who developed a well-known developmental theory, distinguishes between (at least) three forms, which should be briefly accounted for here.

First, there is *primary* (immediate, direct, unreflected, authentic, "genuine") intersubjectivity between an infant and a carer in an I–thou relationship. Here, it would not make sense to talk about shared (cognitive) *understanding* of things; rather, we have pre-logical and pre-propositional interactions (Duranti 2010, 8). This kind of intersubjectivity involves little of individual subjectivity on the part of the infant. But the infant-carer interactivities build on several dialogical prerequisites:[15]

a. the infant has a biologically induced disposition for interaction and mirroring,
b. the infant arrives in a world that is already inhabited by and meaningful for the adult partners, and
c. these carers usually treat infants and children *as if* they understand more than they actually do.

Later, with the advent of shared attention to external objects (a third entity intervening in the interaction: the 'object'), there will be (what Trevarthen calls) *secondary* intersubjectivity ('I– thou–it').

Still later, there is *tertiary* intersubjectivity, when participants start to address peripheral others (third parties). The primary participants in the communicative encounters might then work with a "split" attention, with a "sideward glance" (to speak with Bakhtin) to third parties and remote others; not only 'I, thou/you, and it' but also 'we/they', "bystanders" and also "generalised others".[16] Once we have interactional language at our disposal, we can have subjectivities enhanced by thinking and supported by written language (which is of course indirectly intersubjectively based). Intersubjectivities will now involve more forms of (partially) shared knowledge of the world, and in addition to addressivity and responsivity, also other kinds of contextuality and feelings for genre differences. In the end, the tertiary stage includes virtually all available cultural forms, civilisations and literacies of late modernity.

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15. Other illustrative examples can be drawn, for example, from the life of deaf-blind-born individuals and their partners (Souriau, Rødbroe, and Janssen 2008).

16. Cf. the quadrilateral 'diamond' in Linell (2009, 95).

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These forms of intersubjectivity partly live side by side in adult life. For example, there can still be situations of primary intersubjectivity, e.g. in exceptional situations of intimacy in which parties share feelings and actions within a kind of closed cocoon, often in a physically shielded region, in oblivion of the outside world. Certain conversational situations can also be exceptionally close and mutually attuning; Hodges (2011, 152) speaks of "fabulous conversations" with "unself-conscious closure" and even a "taste of heaven" in such cases.

Intersubjectivity in situated communicative projects (episodes) and cognitive events (Steffensen et al. 2010, 215) also involves *internal* dialogue. We can talk about imaginary objects and happenings, joke, lie and betray. These activities also presuppose forms of intersubjectivity, and of course language. Vygotsky (1978) describes internal dialogue as a further and later development of external interaction. He also talks about forms of intersubjectivity in different stages and at different levels of (ontogenetic, socio-historical, micro-interactional) development/genesis.

10. Donald: Stages of co-evolution of culture and cognition

Merlin Donald (1991; 2001; 2008) has presented an influential model of the co-development of cognition and culture in a biological-cultural evolutionary perspective. In this theory, culture is the necessary content-provider for brains. Cultures are for Donald distributed cognitive systems ("cognizing mind-sharing cultures"; 2008, 197). In his words, "[t]he individual is transformed by an immersion in a distributed system." (2008, 196). Brains and cultures, the latter by definition social rather than individual, have co-developed over an extensive time-scale, presumably over 5 million years or so, since the end of the Miocene period of geology. Donald suggests four periods of human co-evolution of biology (especially brain specialisation) and cultures: episodic, mimetic, mythic and theoretic, according to Table 1. The different stages therefore involve different forms of interactivities and intersubjectivities distributed at various levels of complexity.

Donald's (2001) model is a theory of phylogenetic evolution, in which brains and cultures co-develop. The role of overt interactivity is, however, somewhat backgrounded in his account. Trevarthen's theory of evolving intersubjectivity (Section 9), by contrast, deals with infants' and children's developments in a world which already contains oral language, written literacy and computer use (which are all very recent developments in a phylogenetic perspective).

Despite the differences, it is interesting to compare Trevarthen's model of ontogenetic development with Donald's stages of (partly phylogenetic and partly socio-historical) mind-culture development. The new-born infant would presumably partly be on the episodic stage in Donald's system, although the human

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Table 1. Merlin Donald's four stages (table quoted from Donald 2008: 200; cf. also (slightly different in) Donald 2001: 260)

Stage	Species/Period	Novel forms of representation	Manifest change	Cognitive governance
Episodic	Primate	Complex episodic event perceptions	Improved self-awareness and event sensitivity	Episodic and reactive; limited voluntary expressive morphology
Mimetic (1st transition)	Early hominids, peaking in *H. erectus* (4 M to 0.4 Mya)	Nonverbal action modeling	Revolution in skill, gesture (including vocal), nonverbal communication, shared attention	Mimetic: increased variability of custom, cultural "archetypes"
Mythic (2nd transition)	Sapient humans, peaking in *H. sapiens* (0.5 Mya to present)	Linguistic modeling	High-speed phonology, oral language, oral social record	Lexical invention, narrative thought, mythic framework of governance
Theoretic (3rd transition)	Recent sapient cultures	Extensive external symbolization, both verbal and nonverbal	Formalisms, large-scale theoretic artifacts and massive external memory storage	Institutionalized paradigmatic thought and invention

infant very early moves into the mimetic level (if it is not there already from birth). The spoken language development belongs to the mimetic and primarily mythic stages. Modern societies, civilisations, literacies, institutions and technologies are of course at the "theoretic" level, these phenomena creating new forms of tertiary intersubjectivity.

Donald's brain-culture co-evolution thus has a counterpart also in ontogenesis (Trevarthen) and socio-historical genesis. It is important to point out that minds (perhaps not brains that much) and cultures continue to co-develop in societal usage, that is, in the incessantly ongoing practices, and not just in acquisition. Internal dialogue in solo thinking is a late specialisation in all the genetic perspectives, and was further transformed when people began to read texts silently and privately. Interactivities and intersubjectivities appeared before the specialised form of cognition in solo thinking (actually a covert intersubjectivity too). It is therefore strange to present these things upside down, as if thinking precedes overt interaction. Yet, this has been done in a good deal of Western philosophy, i.e. the Cartesian tradition which starts out from the full-fledged adult thinker (Section 5). But autonomous individuality, in which external interactivity is very limited, is an exceptional case in human life.

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11. The relationship between intersubjectivity and interactivity once more

I have hinted at Husserl's struggle to find a philosophical basis for intersubjectivity. Basically, his own theorising was based on exploring the nature of the individual mind ('subjectivity'), but he later approached intersubjectivity because of the impossibility of solipsism (see Duranti 2010; Zahavi 2001; 2012; Csordas 2008, 120, n. 5). I have argued here not only for intersubjectivity, but indeed, that interactivity is more basic than intersubjectivity. But then again, why do people like Duranti (2008) prefer to say that intersubjectivity is primary with respect to interactivity? In addition to what was said in Section 5, one answer might be that one might see interactivity as simply one (externalised) form of intersubjectivity, the latter being the general phenomenon. Another reason might be that interactivity, in the sense of overt social interaction, need not be involved in human sense-making (see Section 8 above). But one should here recall the dialogist assumption that solo thinking too involves 'internal dialogue'. This theory goes back to the Vygotskyan idea of the internalisation of sociodialogue (Vygotsky 1978, 57). In other words, external interactivity may belong to the individual's prior experience, rather than the now current moment of sense-making. But is not solo thinking "subjective" rather than "intersubjective"? Yes, in one obvious sense, but according to dialogist theory, subjectivity falls back on prior (interactive) intersubjectivity.

Interactivity can be taken as a form of intersubjectivity, thus treating the latter as the superordinate category. For example, interactivity may be called "the architecture of intersubjectivity" (Rommetveit 1976; Heritage 1984, 254ff). But seen from a different vantage point, this means that overt interactivity (sociodialogue, the subject matter of ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis) is the basic form of intersubjectivity.

12. Dialogical metatheory with regard to language.

Dialogical theories about direct and indirect interdependences between self and others in sense-making practices will have ramifications for our understanding of language. I shall only make two points here:

1. We move away from the old dichotomy between the single individual (language user) and his/her usage vs. the language system,[17] towards a new

17. In view of the fact that dialogism recognises the heterogeneities and tensions that exist within and across language communities, one may suggest that we need to abandon the notion of singular language systems ("languages" like English or Swedish), perhaps in favour of a notion of 'superdiversities', sets of mixed linguistic resources with different origins and stylistic values (Blommaert

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analytic distinction between the individual social person in the company of others in situated actions ("situations") vs. being part of situation-transcending sociocultural practices ("traditions"; Linell 2009). Chomsky (1965), with his Cartesian ideas about the individual, ideal speaker-listener and the homogeneous speech community (cf. Section 1 above), does not have the conceptual tools to deal with such linguistic realities.

2. We are dealing with participants in interactivities, building and understanding real utterances (texts, etc.) in the world. Participants may abstract patterns from the experience of such utterance-building processes, but we are still concerned with *real utterances*, not with some putative "mental" language. There are of course also "internal" utterances, "inner dialogue" etc in solo-thinking, but there is no evidence that they work with another (abstract "underlying") language than the public language of utterances.

By way of conclusion, the old linguistics, typically abstract, formal, generative (multi-stratal), and mentalistic, must be replaced by a new linguistics, a more concrete linguistics building on interactivity- and utterance-based, monostratal language in the public world.

13. General consequences of the recognition of the centrality of interactivity/intersubjectivity

In this section, I wish to briefly summarise some consequences of the interactionist/dialogical (meta-)theory at more abstract levels of generality:

– First of all, the meta-theory has consequences for our views on the sense-making mind: instead of a purely individual mind, we have a distributed cognitive system. For example, Steffensen, Thibault and Cowley (2010)[18] deal with 'cognitive events' as involving individual and shared knowledge and experiences, including shared communicative biographies, cultural norms, social hierachies, interpretations/sense-makings of events, objects and artefacts in the concrete situation, practical and normative constraints on verbal interaction (e.g. all people cannot talk simultaneously in a multi-person situation), and

and Rampton 2011; Duarte and Gogolin 2013). After all, monolithic national languages have been regarded as political and academic constructions by many linguists for quite a long time (see Linell 2005, and references there). Yet, although space does not allow me to argue the point here, my hunch is that some proponents of superdiversities have so far overstated their theories a bit.

18. Steffensen, Thibault and Cowley (2010), Cowley (2011) and others in the 'distributed language' group of scholars coined their term on Hutchins's (1995) notion of 'distributed cognition'.

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the actual sociodialogue (verbal interaction) with its intercorporeal dynamics. That is,

i. we move away from viewing single individuals as autonomous 'monological' sense-makers (minds/brains with internal processing as cognitive systems of their own). However, we do not assume that there are any other advanced sense-makers than human beings (with some allowance for certain higher animals, computer systems); in particular, there are no superordinate, supernatural sense-making systems.
ii. Instead, we take individuals to be social beings ("dialogical individuals"), and societies build upon their interactivities. Institutions, being kinds of cognitive-communicative constructions, can exert a constraining, as well as enabling, impact on individuals (Searle 2009). This can be seen as a "weakly dialogical" position.
iii. Thus, cognitive systems are distributed, and comprise more than (expanded) individual minds. Ecosocial environments involve other individuals (concrete others), and (imaginary) generalised others; there are also objects, artefacts etc. with affordances for interpretations and inscribed meaning potentials. However, of particular importance is the fact that self-other relations play an important role, which amounts to a "strongly dialogical" position (as compared to (ii).).
iv. As Duranti (2010) makes clear, sociodialogue is not so much about achieving shared understanding. Following Husserl's (1989) idea of 'trading places', he suggests instead that it is about the possibility of trading or exchanging ideas and stances (p. 6). Accordingly, Duranti holds that 'shared understanding' is a partially inappropriate characterisation of (the goals of) ordinary human communication. This reasoning, I believe, is in line with the emphasis in ethnomethodology on sufficient (rather than common or shared) understanding, and with Rommetveit's (1974, 29ff) notion of *partially* shared intersubjectivity. With Weigand (2009) we can say that communication or sociodialogue is about trying to come to an understanding that works (at least for the moment) for the participants *in situ*.

– The meta-theory also implies a move *from language systems to processes in languaging*. This increases the emphasis on aspects of communication, at the expense of more formal aspects, such as the grammaticality of utterances. We no longer assume that language systems determine the shapes of utterances; surely, speakers have automatised many aspects of their linguistic conduct (most often in accordance with shared norms), but there is some wiggle-room for interlocutors, who will then be held accountable for their linguistic actions. Furthermore, it gives us a chance to begin to explore the crucial role of

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such dimensions as trust/distrust in others (and self) and in communicative processes (Linell and Marková 2013).

– This meta-theory solves conceptual problems in language theory (or other social sciences and psychology), in particular the "contradiction" (Section 1) between individualism and collectivism. Both these stances are unsatisfactory. We need aspects of both, but not in and through preserving the Cartesian dichotomy but in trying to build a compromise with a crucially important component connecting them: the interactivity between self and other, a dialogical corner-stone.[19]
– Dialogical meta-theory may also entail some political consequences, which need to be briefly mentioned. I stated above that dialogical theories must form a meta-theory that is capable — through the mediation of theories of more specific data domains — of describing and explaining *any* kind of human sense-making. In this sense, it is far from only a theory just for open, symmetrical communication with equal opportunities for participants. At the same time, however, it is possible to derive from some parts of dialogical meta-theory normative ideas about how to organise the co-existence with other people. The emphasis on interdependencies between self and others may be used in the development of an applied ethics, and in political ideologies based on *solidarity* considerations, against (economic and other) forms of neoliberalism in which strong parties exploit the weaknesses of others. Often, there is something like the 'Golden Rule' (like in Matthew 7:12, and elsewhere) in such a dialogist ethics.

14. Summary

The more substantial points about intersubjectivity and interactivity made in this paper include the following:

– *Interactivity is more basic than intersubjectivity*. Both notions, however, are fundamental for the meta-theory of sense-making (cognition, communication).
– Interactivities and intersubjectivities are of *many types* (e.g. primary, secondary, tertiary intersubjectivity). The first point above must therefore be relativised with regard to developmental stages. That interactivity precedes intersubjectivity, and especially subjectivity and cognitive understanding, holds most clearly

19. Interactivities take place between sense-making individuals or within such individuals ('internal dialogue'). These individuals necessarily have bodies. Therefore, one may argue that the interactivity theory of sense-making implies 'intercorporeality', interaction among minded organisms, an idea grounded in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy (Csordas 2008). This in turn may raise doubts about individual agency, which is otherwise presupposed in many forms of dialogism. I will discuss this issue elsewhere (Linell 2014).

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for the early communicative and cognitive stages. Once the child has attained tertiary intersubjectivity (Section 9) and adult-like language, strategic thinking using language becomes a real possibility, and the individual can begin to use language more reflectively, and in joking, cheating, betraying and lying, that is, intersubjectivity and even subjectivity can now precede interactivities.

– Intersubjectivities are *partial*, rather than complete; they are intersubjectivities for current practical purposes, and communication is usually not about achieving completely shared understandings among participants, but about sufficient understandings for current practical purposes. Furthermore, intersubjectivity cannot be seen independently from *alterity* (that the other is necessarily different from one's self).
– Many intersubjectivities are *tacit*, and taken for granted. In addition, there are many factors contributing to a lack of explicit intersubjectivity (not everybody can disclose all his/her ideas, thoughts, intentions, feelings etc.). For example, we often act *as if* we trust the other in communication (feigned rather than genuine complete trust; cf. Linell and Marková 2013).

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